11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5



objects of manipulation, their own creative energies will go unused. Only when their personal aspirations can be linked with co-operative endeavors or collective projects will their participation be sufficiently motivated to draw forth new sources of energy.

The traditional approach, moreover, does not take into account the available intelligence of the population. It neither takes advantage of the understanding of immediate problems possessed by those concerned nor responds to their pressing needs and interests. The result is failure to make improvements in areas ripe for change, and antagonism or frustration of the elements of the population involved.

Given the relative ineffectuality and unresponsiveness of traditional methods of mobilization, and the new demands for concerted action unleashed by the process of urbanization and the growth of modern aspirations, it is natural that new forms of association should emerge to fill the sociological vacuum. That these new associations have been late in coming merely reflects the tenacity of traditional habits and institutions, as well as the reluctance of the government to permit the formation of groups which might have any sort of political or parapolitical ambitions. But during the past decade, and particularly since the rebellion of December, 1960, a variety of novel associational forms have come into being or have significantly diffused throughout the country. These associations may be described under three general categories: (1) formal associations of indigenous inspiration, (2) formal associations of foreign inspiration, and (3) informal associations.

*Formal Associations of Indigenous Inspiration*

*Eddĭr.*—Probably the oldest and most widely diffused of the modern associations in Ethiopia, the *eddĭr* is a form of welfare institution. Its functions are primarily to help defray the cost of funerals; to assist families in the event of the death, illness, unemployment, or imprisonment of their breadwinners; and to help in the case of loss due to fire. Members of an *eddĭr* are obliged to contribute to a common fund and to attend the funerals of other members. (Twenty-five cents a month is not an uncommon payment, although in rural centers the contributions are often solicited only in time of need.) The institution is said to have originated among the Gurage and to have become more widely adopted during the Italian invasion, when many people who were killed had no relatives to bury them. Since then *eddĭr* have been established in towns all over the country, fulfilling the vital functions which were performed by kin in the traditional countryside. They are organized on a territorial basis, in villages, towns, and city quarters; on an ethnic basis, as among the Dorze and Wollamo peoples; and even on an institutional basis, as among the employees of some government ministries. Often considerable moral pressure is exerted on townsfolk to become members—the threat of having no one

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5



come to one's funeral is particularly potent—and the transactions of the *eddīr* are strictly governed by elected officers.[39]

*Equb.*—The *equb* is a form of savings association in which weekly or monthly payments of a fixed sum are exchanged for the privilege of receiving a large lump sum at some point in the life of the group. In addition to providing a means of forced saving, the *equb* offers a basis for sociability when the members come together to make their payments and are provided with food and drink. Like the *eddīr*, the *equb* is believed to have originated among the Gurage, and acquired wider popularity following the Italian invasion when many people needed large sums of money for rebuilding homes and purchasing livestock. The mode of operation of an *equb* has been described in the *Ethiopian Observer* as follows:

> A person desiring to start an Iqub will discuss the matter with his friends; if they agree a meeting will be called to discuss the rules and regulations of the proposed new society, and in particular the amount of money to be paid by each member, the frequency of payment and the time and place of meeting. A president, or dagna [literally, "judge"], and a money collector will be elected from among the most respected and reliable members of the group.
>
> The President then asks every member to bring one or two guarantors who will be responsible for payment in case of default for whatever reason it may be.
>
> On the appointed day all the members assemble and the secretary will call the roll. Any member unable to attend is expected to send his subscription in time. The specified sum is then handed by every member (or substitute) to the President. Any latecomer will be fined according to a pre-arranged schedule, this money being kept by the President until the end of the Iqub, when it is used for the common enjoyment of the members. The collected funds are drawn by lot, the winner receiving the total subscription of all the members. The lottery is normally effected by the members writing their names on small pieces of paper which are then placed in a hat, a blind-folded non-member then drawing out the name of the winner.
>
> After each draw, the winner is disqualified from taking part in further lotteries, but continues to pay his fee until every member has drawn his share. If he fails in this duty his guarantors have to pay.
>
> When all at length have been rewarded the time has come to set up a new Iqub.[40]

*Equb* have been established by members of virtually all low- and middle-income groups—clerks, merchants, servants, peasants, policemen. Their rapid increase, in response to the growing importance of money in Ethiopia's econ-

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5



journal, but also an engineers' association, a college teachers' association, and an Ethiopian writers' association. Earlier attempts to establish an organization of lawyers have not yet reached fruition.

*National and International Service Organizations.*—A final group of formal associations consists of those which include non-Ethiopian nationals as well as Ethiopians in their membership and which carry out welfare services of various sorts. The Ethiopian Red Cross, the Ethiopian Women's Welfare Association, the YMCA, and the Rotary Club of Addis Ababa have been active for more than a decade. More recently, the International Christian Fellowship was formed with an eye to discussing ways of translating Christian principles into social action, and the Social Service Society has broken new ground in the welfare field with its ambitious program of relocating and rehabilitating Addis Ababa indigents.

### *Informal Associations*

Another significant sociological development since the 1960 rebellion has been the blossoming of what might be called "mutual confidence groups." Although the public climate remains somewhat tense and generalized suspicion still prevails, a step has been taken away from the complete atomism of the pre-rebellion era. These groups consist of numbers of friends, bound by such factors as kinship, common ethnic background, relationships formed during study abroad, and occupational ties. Perhaps the most important single bond underlying these groups derives from friendships formed during the crucial experience of attending secondary school together. While for the most part these groups carry out no organized activities or structured discussions, they do provide a context in which any of the issues of the day can be discussed with fairly complete frankness and without fear of reprisal.

There are some progressive Ethiopians who would like to see these groups become the nuclei of action groups and political parties, even on an overt basis. The prevailing view among them, however, seems to be that this is as far as they can go under the present regime.

The efflorescence of voluntary associations in Ethiopia during the past half dozen years constitutes a remarkable thickening of the fabric of Ethiopian society. It may be seen as a vast, unconscious process of arousing and co-ordinating energies to meet the novel realities of Ethiopia's current historical situation. What relationship to this collective process have the individualistic features of Amhara character and society which were discussed above?

It may be observed that in virtually none of the cases cited above were the Amhara the initiators of the associational forms in question. The territorial and "project" *māhebar* were introduced into Ethiopian life by the Gurage; so, as far as present evidence indicates, were the *eddĭr* and the *equb*. The labor